

EXCAVATIONS AT SARAÇHANE IN ISTANBUL: FOURTH PRELIMINARY REPORT

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THE fourth campaign on the early sixth-century church of St. Polyeuktos at Saraçhane in Istanbul lasted for eleven weeks, from 5 June to 19 August 1967.¹ The aims this year were to complete the excavation of the body of the church, to probe levels outside the north wall of the church where they lay deepest, to excavate more deeply in the narthex, and to explore the atrium.² The lifting at the end of the third campaign of the temporary road which had lain across the site gave more room for manoeuvre, and some 1,500 tons of hard, sterile topsoil, deposited during grading operations in 1960, were now removed

¹ The excavation is undertaken jointly by Dumbarton Oaks and the Istanbul Archaeological Museum. We are again most grateful to the Turkish Directorate General of Antiquities and to the Municipal Authorities of Istanbul for permission to continue this work, and to Mr. N. Dolunay, Director of the Istanbul Archaeological Museum, for his help and encouragement and for the valuable assistance of the technical departments of his Museum. Our staff this year consisted of Mr. M. Alişan, Mr. C. Arthur (in charge of nave), Miss S. Barutcu, Mr. O. Belener, Mr. C. Burgess (in charge of north aisle and area), Mrs. Harrison (photographer), Dr. J. W. Hayes (pottery specialist), Dr. G. D. B. Jones (in charge of narthex and atrium), Mr. G. R. J. Lawson (architect), Mr. J. Little, Miss P. Pfeiffer (cataloguer), Mr. S. Şişmanoğlu and Mr. M. Vickers. Dr. Hayes left at the end of July, and Miss Barutcu was in charge of the pottery processing during August.

² For earlier campaigns, see our "First Preliminary Report," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 19 (1965), p. 230f., and "Second and Third Preliminary Reports," *DOP*, 20 (1966), p. 222f. Reports have also appeared in *Türk Arkeoloji Dergisi*, XIII, 2 (1964), p. 108f., *Annual of the Archaeological Museums of Istanbul*, 13-14 (1966), p. 131f., and *Anatolian Studies*, XVI (1966), p. 34f. There have been annual summaries in M. J. Mellink, "Archaeology in Asia Minor," *American Journal of Archaeology*, 69 (1965), p. 149; 70 (1966), p. 159; 71 (1967), p. 173.

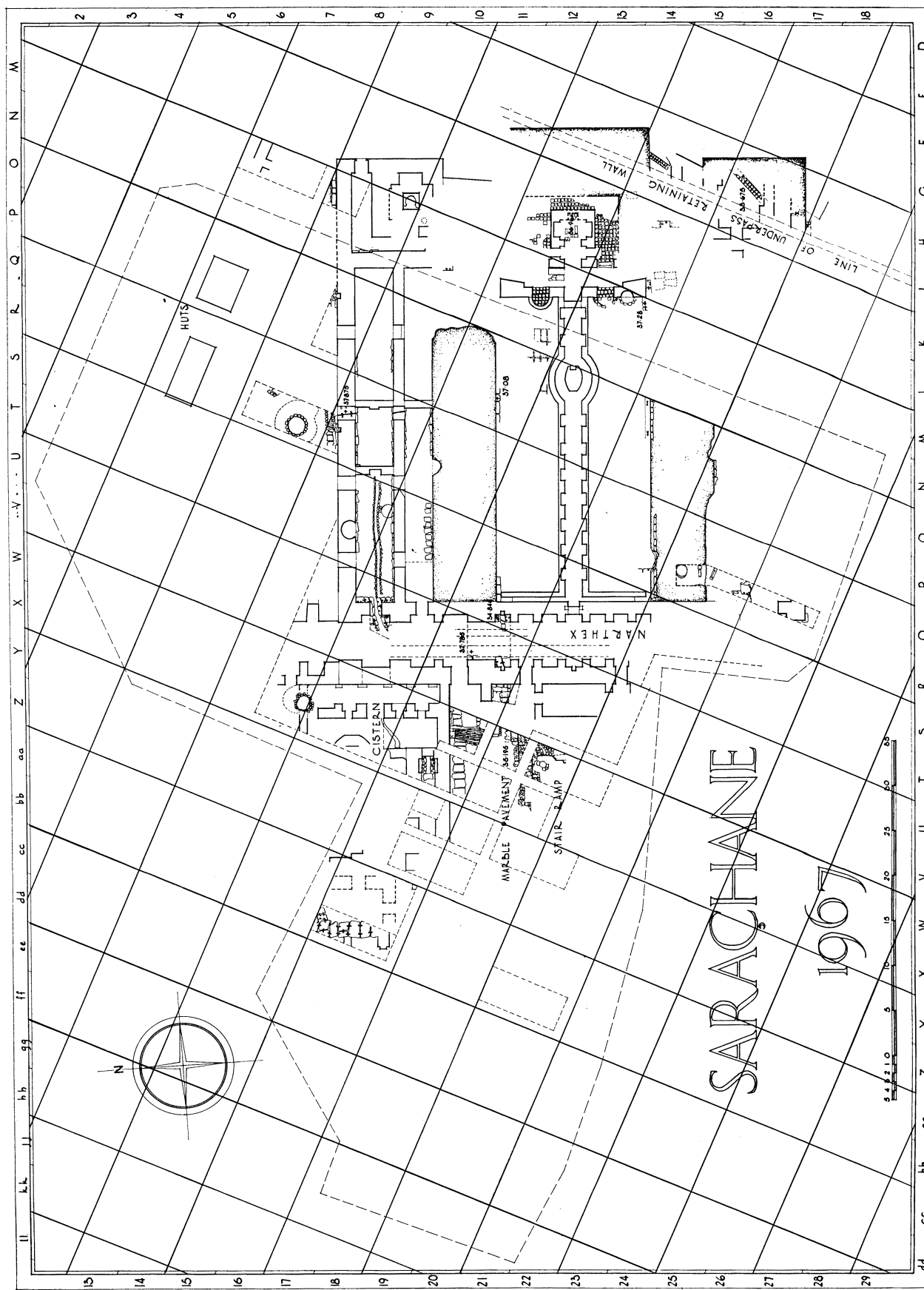
mechanically from the church and atrium by caterpillar loader and lorries. During July the labor force rose to sixty-seven, more than twice the number previously employed at any one time.

A fifth and final campaign of excavation is planned for 1968, and, with the encouragement of the Municipal and Museum Authorities, two practical measures for the future of the site have been taken: the area is to be a park, and landscaping plans, whereby some of the main walls of the church will remain visible in a setting of trees and gardens, are being prepared by Mr. Ralph E. Griswold; and in the substructures of the north aisle the first part of a subterranean depot for the permanent storage of much of the excavated material has already been completed. The present state of the excavation, at the end of the fourth campaign, can be seen in the plan (fig. A) and two general photographs (figs. 1 and 2).

THE NAVE

The two massive foundation walls defining the nave were exposed for their full lengths, each revealing a water-channel immured behind its inner face. These channels ran westward, turned sharply and steeply inward against the church's west wall, and, meeting in the floor of the passage which runs along the church's axis, discharged into a conduit beneath the narthex.

The purpose of the passage beneath the nave and its connection with the drainage system are not yet understood. The passage was choked with destruction debris of the church (including several fine pieces of architectural carving, p. 275f. *infra*), and at one point its north wall is preserved to the height of an arch springing, providing some indication of the original level of the nave floor above it, about 5 meters above the general ground level.



A. General Plan of Church Excavation

Excavation between the passage and the two massive foundations showed that the nave floor had been supported, not as the aisle floors, by vaults, but by solid packing. This packing was undisturbed in the western part of the nave and consisted of layers of rammed clay and earth beneath a deep fill of marble chips—evidently masons' waste from the intricate sculpture which adorned the church and which must, for the most part, have been carved *in situ*.³

R/9-II AND THE AISLES

A deep trench in R/9-II, against the church's north wall, uncovered a well-preserved stone-capped section of the conduit flanking the church (fig. 3). Although there were some indications of the sixth-century ground level (corresponding with this conduit and overlying a deep clay fill with fifth-century material), much of the evidence had been destroyed by a large Turkish stone-lined pit and its packing of sand. In a layer over the pit was a group of small marble heads (figs. 15-20, described on p. 277 *infra*), while the pit itself, excavated to a depth of 7.50 m., yielded only destruction debris from the church.

The substructures of the north aisle consist of two parallel barrel-vaulted passages entered from the narthex (fig. 4). The brick vaulting springs from offset levelling courses of large blocks. It is pierced by wide openings (presumably windows), four in the church's north wall, four in the wall between the passages; their sills are above sixth-century ground level outside, as determined in R/9-II. The internal walls are of concrete faced by small, irregular, undressed blocks, in striking contrast to the fine masonry of the church's outside wall (cf. figs. 3 and 4). In the western part of the northern passage a sixth-century earth floor overlying natural sand was found at a depth of 2.50 m. beneath the vault springing; the walls themselves penetrate for a further 2.15 m. into this sand, which was cut vertically to receive them, without foundation packing. The floor was overlaid by deep, productive fills of earth, which

have provided an important sequence of Early and Middle Byzantine pottery (cf. p. 278 *infra*).

The northern passage was divided into three sectors by structurally secondary cross-walls. In the central sector the sixth-century floor was somewhat higher than in the western, and beneath it were parts of earlier walls on a different alignment, corresponding with other early remains in the adjacent passage.

The southern part of the church is poorly preserved, but a narrow trench in R/20-22 confirmed that the south aisle was also divided into two parallel passages entered from the narthex.

THE NARTHEX

The narthex had been cleared of destruction debris last year, disclosing a deep dark-earth fill which we penetrated in the northern part.⁴ Another trench across the narthex (overlapping U/15 and TU/16) was now cut through the dark fill, uncovering a sixth-century plaster floor at the level of an offset course of large greenstone cramped blocks in the narthex walls. Beneath this floor were found two parallel brick-vaulted conduits running north-south: the eastern (internal width 0.80, ht. 1.50 m.) was penetrated by a vertical waterpipe in the western face of the church's west wall and evidently served the church; the western (internal width 1.50, ht. 1.60 m.) appears to be independent of this system and may be a city drain. Both are apparently contemporary with the building of the church.

THE ATRIUM

A number of trenches were opened to explore the atrium and the cistern which had at a late period been inserted in its northern part. The area was far more productive than had been expected, but the evidence is complicated, and further excavation is necessary before it can be fully understood. This will be our main objective in 1968.

A trench in W/18-19 confirmed that the vault against the central part of the outer wall of the narthex was, as suggested last year, the underpinning for a staircase leading

³ Fragments of mosaic pavement recovered from the nave in 1965 had been set on a bed of marble chips (cf. "Second and Third Preliminary Reports," p. 227).

⁴ Illustrated in "Second and Third Preliminary Reports," fig. 25.

up to the church. Marble flagstones of a pavement were found *in situ* surrounding the concrete base of the staircase. The staircase had been about 8 meters long, and its height, from the pavement to the estimated level of the narthex floor, must have been about 5 meters. Overlying the pavement, and underlying the church's destruction debris, was a layer of dark earth containing several simple graves. Material recovered from this layer included a "stacked" group of ten scyphate bronze coins, at least five of them of Isaac II (1185-95),⁵ and a small lead cross.

The lead cross (ht. 0.076 m.; figs. 21, 22) has molded decoration on both sides and deserves a brief description here:

Side A: Christ Crucified; nimbus with cross, head inclined to right, hair to left shoulder, medium-length pointed beard; drapery hanging from waist to knees; sun and moon above cross, a retrograde inscription below the arms with an abbreviated version of John XIX, 26-7 (ἰδοῦ, ὁ υἱός σου and ἰδοῦ, ἡ μήτηρ σου);⁶ in a medallion at the end of each arm of the cross frontal busts of Matthew (foot of cross), Mark (left arm), Luke (head of cross), and John (right arm), identified by retrograde inscriptions.

Side B: Virgin *orans* (hands in front of breast), nimbed; inscribed MH(τη)P Θ(εο)Υ; again, four medallions with frontal busts: Basil (at foot, with retrograde inscription), two winged and nimbed Archangels (to left and right, without inscriptions), and an unidentified Saint (at top).

The sequence of layers in W/18-19, whereby church debris overlay a dark earth layer with burials above a marble pavement, was also recorded in W/17 (fig. 5) and X/18. In Y/18-19 an upper-storey brick pier was found lying as fallen, complete with its supporting decorated cornice⁷ and a stone course above fourteen brick courses (fig. 6);

⁵ One of these coins bore the oxidized remains of plain-weave linen (?) cloth, woven from S-spun yarns, perhaps the lining of a purse (information from Dr. J. P. Wild, who kindly examined a photograph).

⁶ Read and identified by Prof. I. Ševčenko.

⁷ The decoration is of crosses and scallop shells; a fragmentary block of the same type is illustrated in "Second and Third Preliminary Reports," fig. 12.

the cornice lay about 17 meters from the west wall of the narthex, from which the pier is assumed to have fallen. In W/16, X/15-17 and Y/16-17 were found substantial east-west walls earlier than the cistern and apparently of the sixth century; deeper digging in bb/15-16 revealed two large walls of cramped blocks forming a northwest corner.

Further work on last year's finds, together with the careful removal of some of last year's baulks, indicated that the large secondary cistern was built in the first half of the twelfth century. The abandonment of the atrium and its use as a graveyard probably occurred at the same time. The coins of Isaac II appear to give a firm *terminus post quem* at the end of the twelfth century for the collapse of the church, which was presumably already derelict when its capitals and piers were removed for Venice in the thirteenth.⁸

THE BRICKSTAMPS

During the four campaigns the church has yielded 901 brickstamps, of ninety-five types. Most are on bricks from fallen debris, but some have been recovered from masonry deliberately demolished for this purpose, while others are negative impressions on mortar in walls and vaults. The fallen upper-storey pier in Y/18-19 had one face intact in fourteen courses alternately three bricks and two and two half-bricks wide (fig. 6). Eleven of these bricks were stamped, two on the upper face, nine on the lower. The stamps were all of one type.

ARCHITECTURAL CARVING

Fragments of architectural carving included several items of exceptional interest. Four more pieces of the great inscription⁹ provide essential evidence for a reconstruction

⁸ There was an earthquake in Constantinople on 1 March 1202 (cf. V. Grumel, *La chronologie* [Paris, 1958], p. 480); if our dating is secure, this may be relevant.

⁹ *Palatine Anthology*, I, 10; two fragments of the epigram were found at Saraçhane in 1960 (cf. C. Mango and I. Ševčenko, "Remains of the Church of St. Polyeuktos at Constantinople," *DOP*, 15 [1961], p. 243f.) and a third in 1965 ("Second and Third Preliminary Reports," p. 228).

of the church's superstructure, and a capital and a screen have companions in San Marco at Venice and in the Pantocrator at Istanbul respectively.

1. *Corner block* with inscription (fig. 7). The principal face carries a formal scheme of erect and pendant vine leaves in a diagonal lattice, the right-hand face a scheme of twisting vine stems; to the left of the principal face had sprung a wide arch (or niche), indicated not only by the inscription which descends from an arch before following the lower edge of the block, but by a small area of the soffit (or conch) preserved on the badly broken left-hand side. The inscription reads οὐκ ἔψευσεν ἄριστ[ώδιον]ος ἀνάσσ[ης]; this is from line 9 of the epigram (ht. 1.46, restored lower width of principle face 1.28 m.; found in the nave passage, P/15-16).

2. Fragment of *niche*, decorated with peacock, twisting vine stem and inscription; the text reads τοκ[ῆ]ας, εὐσεβί[ης], which is from lines 15 and 16 of the epigram (ht. 1.30 m.; found, with another substantial fragment of the same block, in the nave passage, Q/16; fig. 8).

3. Fragment of *arch*, decorated with peacock, twisting vine stem and inscription (fig. 9). The text reads . . .]OMENOIN[. . . Although this sequence of letters occurs both in line 13 and in line 25 the find-spot strongly suggests that it is from the latter (ht. 0.97 m.; found in north aisle, S/13-14).

4. Right-hand half of *arch*, decorated with peacocks, twisting vine stem and inscription; the text reads θε]οπειθέα δώματα τεύχει., which is the second half of line 30 of the epigram (ht. 1.44 m.; found in north aisle, R/13; fig. 10).

5. *Engaged pier capital*, with decoration similar to that of the pier capital found in 1964¹⁰ and to the capitals of the so-called *pilastri acritani* in Venice (ht. 0.76 m.; found in W/19; fig. 11).

6. *Pier capital*, decorated on each side with central date palm flanked by twisting plant with flowers; upper border a row of three-lobed features, lower border a scheme of protuberant eggs (each with a cross in light relief) and small pointed leaves—presumably a form of egg-and-dart; at one corner a

rebate (ht. 0.93, base 1.13 square, upper surface 1.30 by 1.33 m.; found in nave passage, P/15-16; fig. 13).

7. *Basket capital* with undercut interlace, decorated on each side with central palmette between leaves (ht. 0.695, base diam. 0.58 m.; found in T/14; fig. 14). This appears to be identical with the capitals at the north and south ends of the west façade of San Marco in Venice, and these latter capitals may perhaps be assigned to St. Polyeuktos.¹¹

8. One hundred and fourteen fragments from various parts of the site of a *screen* or screens, identical to screens in the Pantocrator (Zeyrek Camii), which thus must be *spolia* from St. Polyeuktos.¹² Selected fragments are illustrated in figure 12; there can be no doubt about the sixth-century date of these screens.

THE CHURCH: SOME COMMENTS

The form of the church's superstructure presents a complicated problem, a full discussion of which must await our final study of all the excavated evidence. Some provisional comments may, however, be made. The distribution of the find-spots of the inscribed blocks indicates that the inscription began toward the east end of the south side of the nave (and, incidentally, that the nave collapsed northward); and there appear now to have been six curvilinear exedrae, three on each side of the nave, presumably occupying the broad foundations. A central dome over the two eastern pairs of exedrae, and directly over the presumed ambo, seems to be a possibility (in which case there would be an affinity with St. Eirene), but a basilical roofing cannot be entirely ruled out.

REMAINS EARLIER THAN THE CHURCH

Walls earlier than the church were encountered in the two passages beneath the north aisle, but, although they are roughly

¹¹ The type is found in San Vitale at Ravenna and, in devolved forms, at Cairo and Alexandria (cf. O. M. Dalton, *Byzantine Art and Architecture*, figs. 67, 68, and R. Kautzsch, *Kapitellstudien*, nos. 630-632).

¹² Cf. A. H. S. Megaw, "Notes on Recent Work of the Byzantine Institute in Istanbul," *DOP*, 17 (1963), p. 346 and fig. 9, publishing a newly discovered panel of the same series as the pair in the mimeter.

¹⁰ Cf. "First Preliminary Report," p. 234, figs. 8-11.

aligned with the walls found beneath the eastern part of the church in 1964, it is not yet possible to judge whether they might be part of the fifth-century predecessor of St. Polyeuktos. The site has this year yielded sculpture of three periods earlier than Anicia Juliana's church:

(a) A series of funerary stelai, including one of a gladiator inscribed Μορμίσλων, apparently the first gladiatorial stone to have been found in Istanbul. They are assigned to the second or third century, and were reused as floor slabs in a pre-sixth-century level. Saraçhane was evidently a cemetery area in Roman times.¹³

(b) A fragmentary relief of a frontal female figure with bare right breast and right arm resting on a pillar; certain folds of the drapery (rectangular in section) suggest a fourth-century date.

(c) More or less substantial fragments of twenty-six small heads, of a white marble finer than normal Proconnesian. Although the size varies and there are several clear types, there is no doubt that they form a single series. The majority came from a fill overlying the big Turkish pit in R/9-11, but one from a low level in the north aisle's northern passage indicates that they were on the site and already damaged in Early Byzantine times. The heads had evidently been attached to a monument in very high relief, and they are provisionally assigned to the second quarter of the fifth century. One thinks of a grand sarcophagus, but could they have adorned a church? The date, proposed on stylistic grounds, is appropriate for the fifth-century church built by the Empress Eudocia, which is recorded in the epigram on St. Polyeuktos and which may have occupied the same site. Six of the heads are illustrated here:

(i) Head, with damage to lower part of face; hair combed forward from crown to four rows of tight curls with drilled centers; face polished, pupils drilled; back and left side of head less carefully finished (i.e., head originally inclined to left; ht. 0.105 m., fig. 15).

(ii) Male head, lower part broken; hair finely rasped, with short chisel strokes in front,

delimited from highly polished face by an incised line which also defines the trace of a beard; drilled pupils and ear holes; low forehead, but prominent brows beneath two furrows (ht. 0.08 m., fig. 16).

(iii) Male head (two joining fragments) with mustache and light beard; hair at back roughly chiselled, on top smoothed with rasp, in front cut with chisel in short chunky curls; face highly polished, pupils and nostrils drilled (ht. 0.12 m., fig. 17).

(iv) Male head, largely bald, with mustache and trace of beard (the chin is broken); back of head dressed flat; left side of head less carefully finished than right (i.e., head originally inclined to left); forehead domed above two furrows; face polished, pupils and nostrils drilled (ht. 0.12 m., fig. 18).

(v) Male head (lower part broken) with receding hairline and traces of beard; hair smoothed with rasp behind, chiselled curls in front; high forehead with two furrows; face polished, pupils drilled (ht. 0.112 m., fig. 19).

(vi) Male head (upper left part broken), with receding hairline, mustache, and long beard; hair finely rasped behind, chiselled over temple; face polished, pupil, nostrils, and ear hole drilled (ht. 0.12 m., fig. 20).

REMAINS LATER THAN THE CHURCH

There is still no evidence for activity on the site in Paleaologan times. Various Turkish structures were recorded, including a wide shallow foundation wall of timber-laced concrete at least 40 meters long (extending from Q/12 to X/12), several similar foundations overlying the nave, and a barrel-vaulted cellar intact and empty (probably a nineteenth-century fire shelter) in the area of the atrium. More important contributions, however, to our knowledge of the Turkish period have been the contents of numerous wells and storage-pits, which were choked with rich deposits of pottery.

THE POTTERY

Dr. Hayes was again in charge of the pottery and contributes the following summary:

Pottery finds this year have been prolific (about twice the quantity found in previous seasons), and it was impossible to make a full assessment during the period of excav-

¹³ Cf. N. Firath, *Les stèles funéraires de Byzance gréco-romaine* (Paris, 1964), p. 8.

ation; a partial survey can, however, be attempted.

A large amount of Turkish pottery was recovered from the numerous pits. Several pit-groups are of the mid-sixteenth century, providing considerable new information on that period. An earlier pit produced two well-preserved bowls of so-called "Miletus Ware" (fig. 26) together with three painted sgraffito dishes of North Italian origin, one of them a fine piece decorated with the bust of a girl in full Renaissance style (fig. 25), to be dated to the closing decades of the fifteenth century.

Byzantine material has been more plentiful and significant than in previous years. Although few complete pots were found, the discovery of a sequence of undisturbed deposits has added considerably to our knowledge, particularly of the little-known coarse-wares. Deposits of three periods were distinguished in the deep fill of the northern passage beneath the north aisle. The glazed pottery from the uppermost of these has parallels with Stages III and IV of the Great Palace sequence, and, with the aid of associated coins, may be assigned to the early tenth century. That from the middle layer (characterized by many examples of incised ware) corresponds to Stage I/II and is perhaps of the eighth century. The fill over the floor contained an enormous amount of pottery and should prove instructive as regards the transition from Late Roman to full Byzantine styles. Preliminary work on this group shows that it contains late examples of *Late Roman B* and *C* wares, a few glazed fragments, and many lamps of the latest unglazed types; it is probably of the seventh century. Finds from other parts of the site were less spectacular, but include a fragmentary bowl with incised inscription (..]ΕΝΔΙΑΠΑΝΤΟΚΥΡΙΑ[. .), probably of

the eighth century (fig. 24). From twelfth-century levels came good examples of Persian, fine sgraffito, and "Zeuxippos" wares.¹⁴

The most notable Late Roman pieces are three fragments of dishes with incised decoration on a cut-away background (perhaps copies of Late Antique silverware); one is illustrated in figure 23.¹⁵ Their fabric (a fine light-brown ware with brownish slip) can be matched in a series of fifth-century stamped and rouletted vessels, of which there have been sporadic examples at Saraçhane (cf. "First Preliminary Report," fig. D, 10) and with which they are probably contemporary. Useful material was recovered from the floor-packing of the nave, including fragments of Antioch Shapes 810 and 878.

KEY TO ILLUSTRATED POTTERY

Photographs: figs. 23-26 (1:3)

23. RP. 29. Fragment of large "light-ware" dish; slip cut away from background for figured decoration in slight relief with incised outlines; forelegs of horse (?) and other features.
24. BP. 102. White ware, yellowish to lime-green glaze; inscription outside rim.
25. TP. 552. Italian sgraffito dish; orange clay, creamy glaze inside; bust of girl, with trees and rosettes; light rows of stippling on background, details picked out in green, yellow-brown, and purple paint.
26. TP. 543. "Miletus Ware" bowl, decoration in blue-black and dark greenish blue.

¹⁴ For this ware, see a forthcoming article by A. H. S. Megaw. The Saraçhane pieces do not bear added paint decoration and are probably early in the series.

¹⁵ The only published parallel is *Antioch*, IV, 1, p. 50, LB 16, fig. 35 (third from top on left), pl. x.



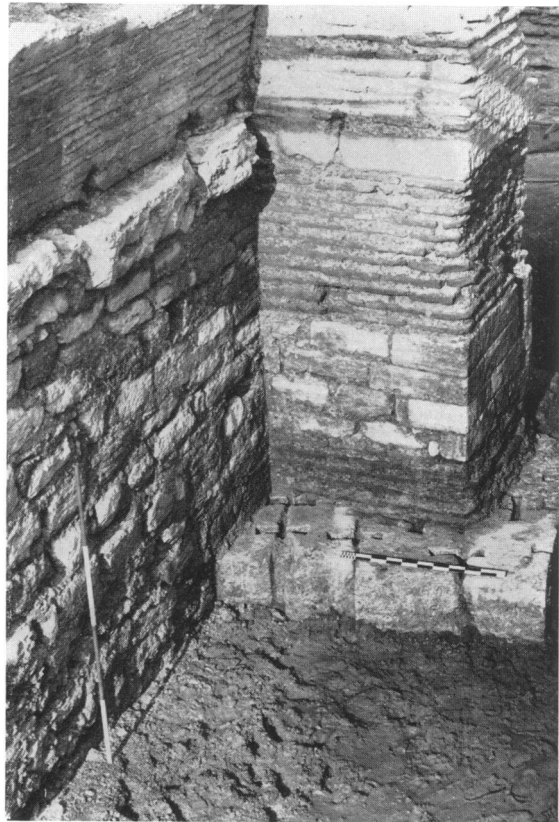
1. Istanbul, Sarayhan. General View from Roof of City Hall, looking Northwest to Fatih Camii.
Note remains of Apse Platform in Underpass Wall at bottom center



2. Istanbul, Sarayhan. General View of Excavation, looking North to Aqueduct of Valens



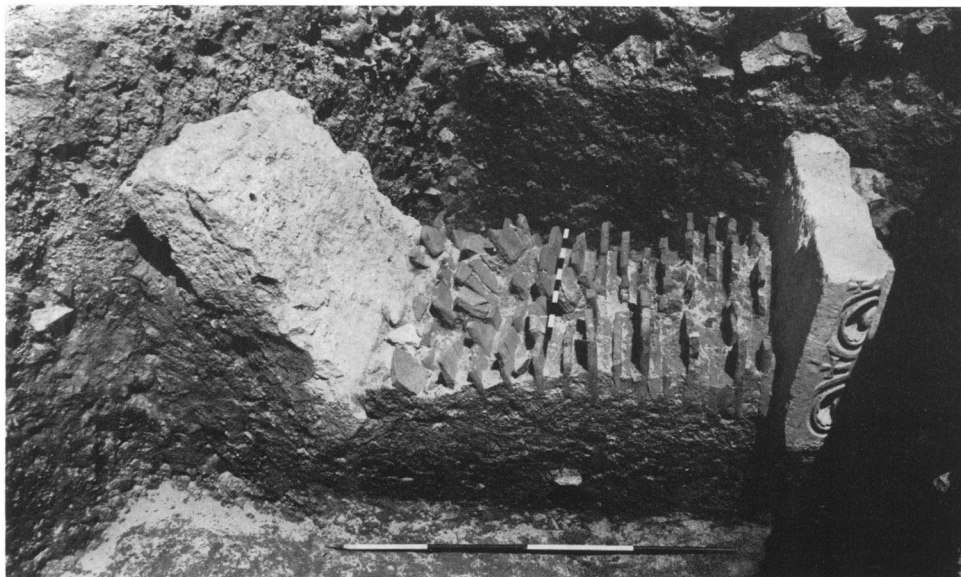
3. Trench in R/9-11, looking South to Church Wall



4. Western part of Northern Passage beneath North Aisle, looking Southwest



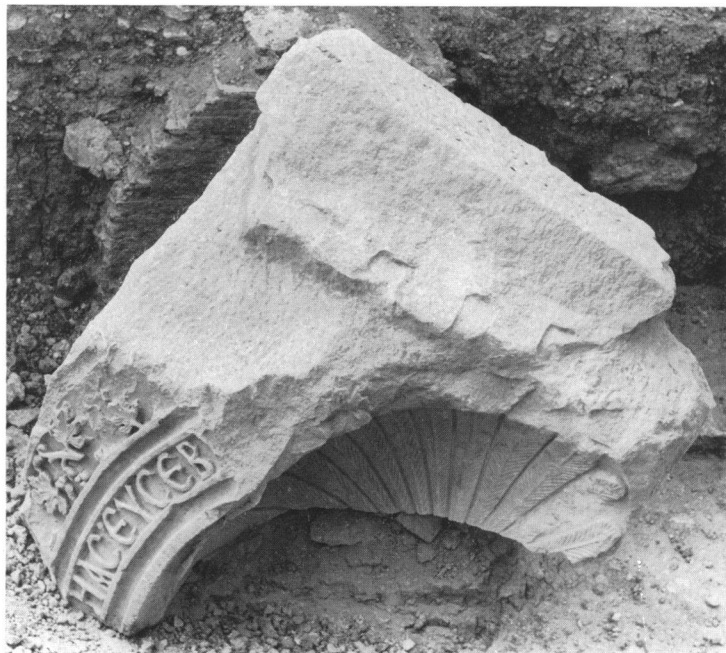
5. Marble Pavement in W/17, looking South



6. Upper Storey Pier in Y/18-19, looking North



7. Corner Block with Inscription



8. Fragment of Niche with Inscription



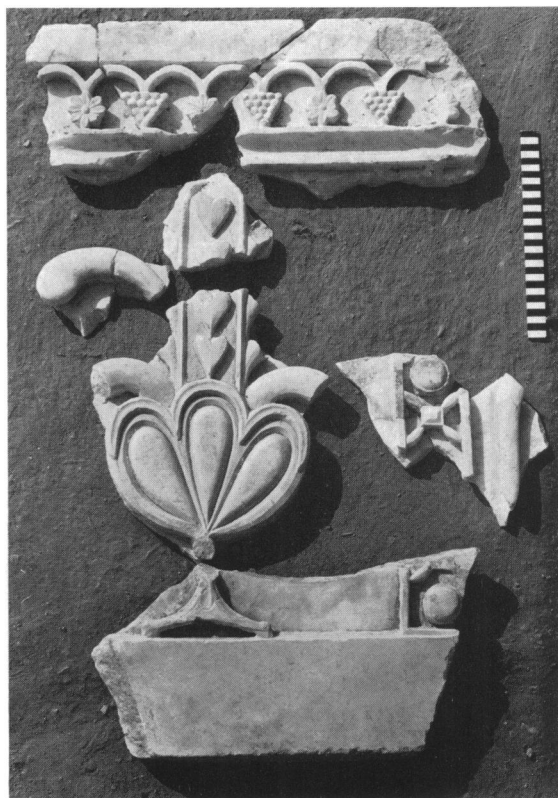
9. Fragment of Arch with Inscription



10. Fragment of Arch with Inscription



11. Engaged Pier Capital



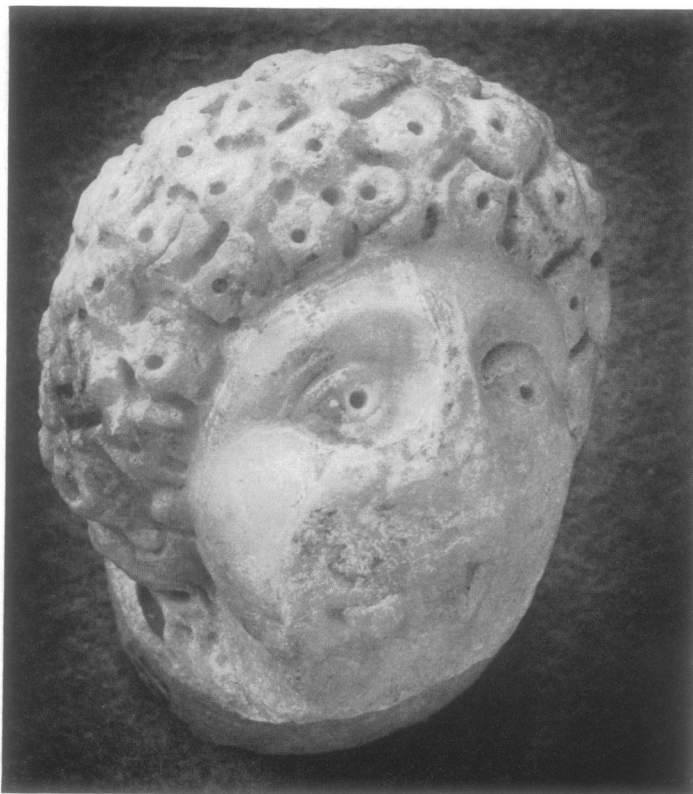
12. Fragments of Screen



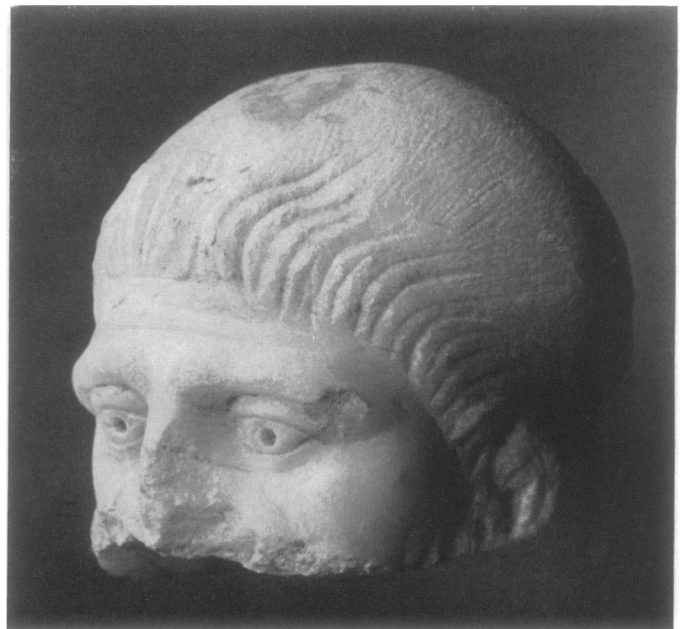
13. Pier Capital



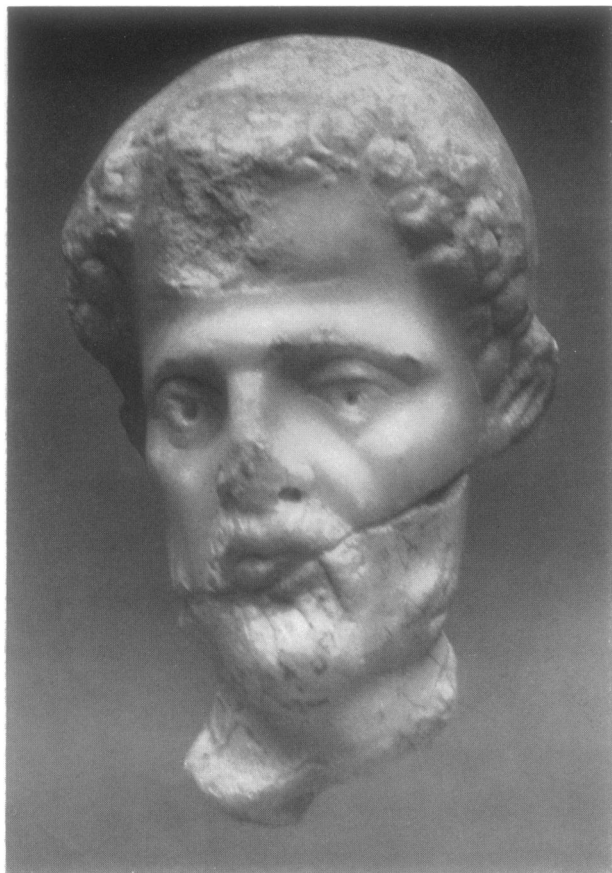
14. Capital



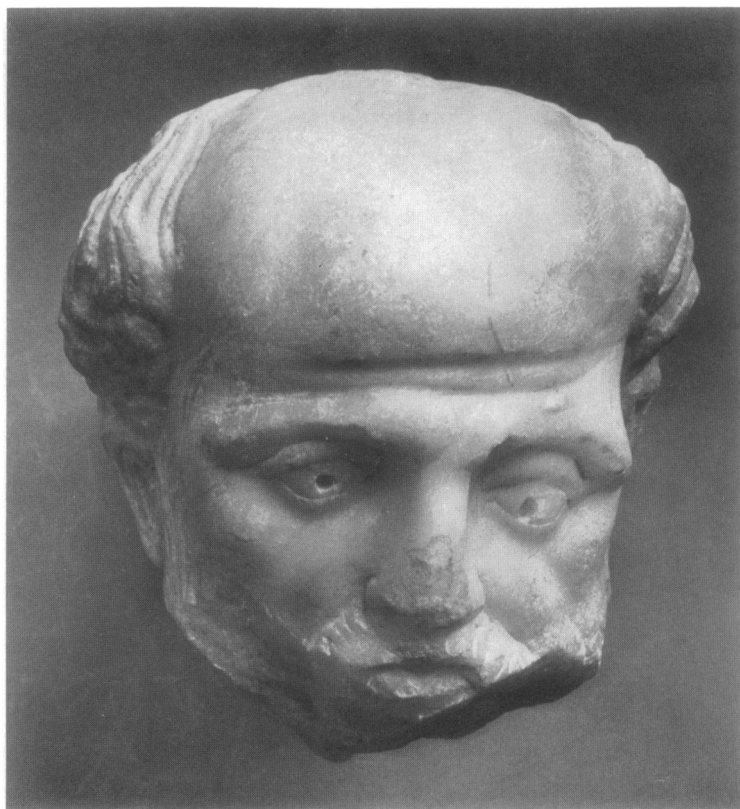
15. Marble Head (i)



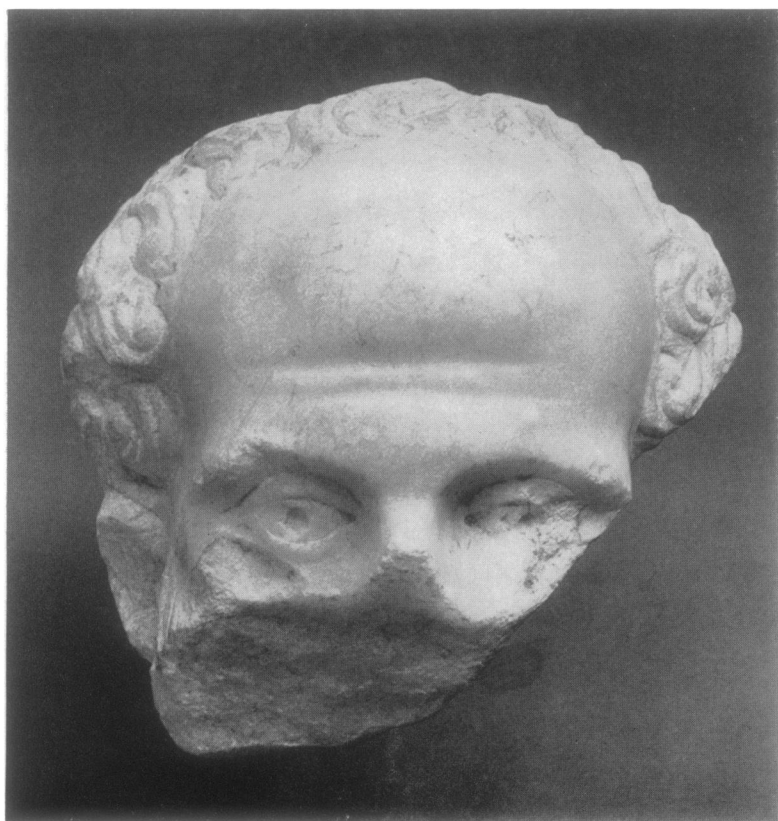
16. Marble Head (ii)



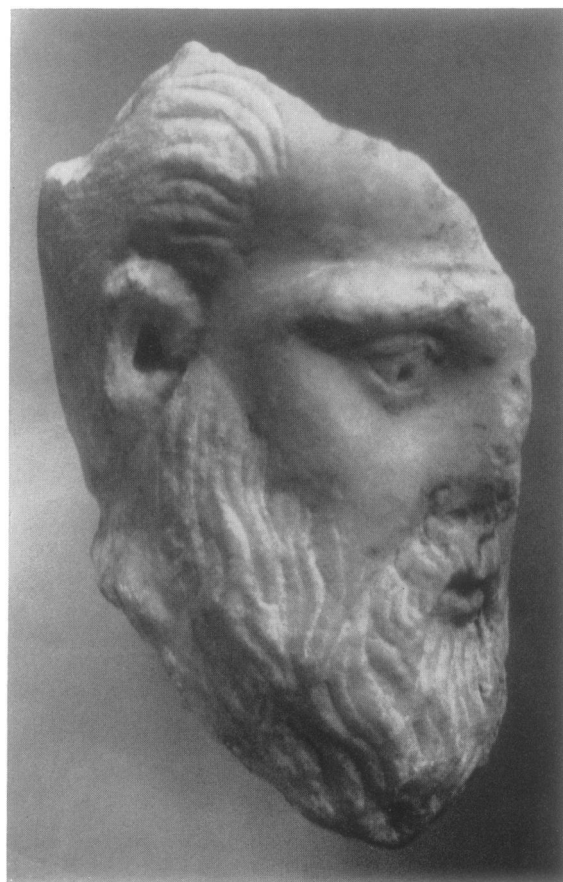
17. Marble Head (iii)



18. Marble Head (iv)



19. Marble Head (v)



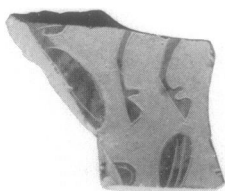
20. Marble Head (vi)



21. Lead Cross, Side A (1:1). Cf. p. 275



22. Lead Cross, Side B (1:1)



23. Sherd of Late Roman
"light ware" (1:3)



24. Byzantine Bowl with
Inscription (1:3)



25. Fragment of North Italian
Dish (1:3)



26. "Miletus Ware" Bowl, Turkish (1:3)